

Safe Environment Program

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Who are volunteers with ‘regular’ contact with children and young people?

The Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend has established that its volunteers who have regular contact with children or young people as part of their volunteer duties must undergo a background screening and participate in safe environment training. In order to determine which volunteers this includes the following criteria and questions should be used. The determination is left to each parish and/or school. The Safe Environment Coordinator is available for consultation at any time.

In writing the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (2002, 2005, and 2011)*, the USCCB established that volunteers whose duties include **ongoing, unsupervised contact** with minors were to undergo background checks. Rather than copying this exact phrase, the word “regular” was chosen by the diocese so as to increase the level of safety afforded children.

Criteria to consider in determining whether regular contact with children or young people exists:

- **Recurring nature of contact;** Will this person repeatedly be around children/young people during a school year or years?
- **Duration of contact;** Will this person have an extended time with children/young people?
- **Directness of contact;** Will the person work one-on-one with a child/young person or with a small group of children/young people? Will another adult be present at any time?

A volunteer must meet only one of these criteria to be included. Because of what has been learned about abuse and the use of grooming in order for an abuser to achieve this goal, we must be very careful who we allow to meet and get to know the children/young people in our parishes and schools.

Types of volunteers always included (this list is not exhaustive):

- Religious education catechists, aides and substitutes
- Sports team coaches, trainers and assistants
- Choir directors/leaders
- Vacation bible school teachers
- Instructors for sacramental preparation and RCIC instructors
- Youth group leaders, aides, and chaperones
- Overnight chaperones, regular drivers
- Altar server trainers
- Adults volunteering for children’s events
- Nursery workers
- Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop volunteers

- Junior Achievement instructors
- After school tutors
- Volunteers who assist in Catholic schools in a variety of ways, but in which the service adds up to ongoing contacts: car pool drivers, field trip chaperones, classroom project helpers

Note: If a parent or family member of a Catholic school student is truly attending ONE event such as a field trip or classroom project and will be in the presence of other adults throughout the event, that person does not have to complete the program. Example: An out-of-town grandparent wants to attend the second grade field trip to the zoo with the child's parent. The children will always be in the presence of two or more adults. This grandparent does not have to complete the program.

Types of volunteers who MAY be excluded:

Whether or not to include these volunteers may depend if the service takes place in a parish or school during hours when children/young people are usually present. If a person performs one of the functions listed below, but does so repeatedly in a school during school hours, that person should be included. This is recommended as the person will have unrestricted access to students in the building.

- Administration and organization volunteers
 - Office envelope stuffers, telephone assistance, etc.
 - Parish event set up and tear down
 - Committee work – finance, school board, parish council
- Adult programs when child contact is not expected
 - Bible study
 - Retreats
 - Sacramental preparation
- Events when children will be present with their families and contact will be limited, sporadic, and not the only focus of the service
 - Parish festivals, breakfasts, picnics